

EFFECT OF WEATHER ON CROPS, DECEMBER, 1919.

By J. WARREN SMITH, Meteorologist in Charge.

Advance of the season.—The first half of the month was unfavorable for outdoor activities in most sections of the country, especially in the Northwest, where it was unusually cold, with the ground mostly covered with snow. Frequent rains also hindered farm work in the lower Mississippi Valley and in many interior southern districts, but it was more favorable in the Southeast. After the middle of the month, weather much more favorable for seasonal farm work prevailed throughout the West, while the general absence of appreciable precipitation and stormy weather the latter part of the month was unusually favorable for field work in nearly all districts. The last week of the month was especially favorable from the upper Mississippi Valley and western Lake region westward to the Rocky Mountains. The roads and fields were muddy in the Southwest the first part of the month, and drifting snow delayed transportation in parts of the upper Mississippi Valley, while work in the cornfields was carried on with difficulty in most central districts. There was a general improvement in the conditions of the roads the latter part of the month, especially in northern States.

Small grains.—Winter grains were covered with snow throughout the month in the northern portions of the principal winter-wheat belt and the west-central portion was covered during most of the first half of the month. The extremely cold weather in the far Northwest during the first two weeks was unfavorable for winter grains, but the rainfall was beneficial in California, and seeding, which had been delayed by drought, was resumed in that State. Cold weather during portions of the month and alternate thawing and freezing at other times, in the absence of snow protection, damaged wheat in portions of the Ohio Valley, particularly in Kentucky and parts of the adjoining States. The lack of sufficient warmth and sunshine was also unfavorable for late-sown wheat in the extreme lower Great Plains. As a result of the warmer weather during the latter part of the month, the snow cover was greatly reduced, or entirely disappeared, in the far Northwest, but the melting was gradual and the soil mostly absorbed the resulting moisture. Winter grains, as a rule, made satisfactory advance in the Southern States, but some injury resulted to oats by frost in portions of the east Gulf area the latter part of the month.

Corn and cotton.—Further damage resulted to ungathered corn by continued rains in the lower Great Plains during the first part of the month, and conditions were unfavorable for husking in most sections until the last decade. The mild, dry weather permitted a resumption of this work in the upper Mississippi Valley during the

last week of the month, while conditions were favorable in most other sections of the country where husking was not completed. Cotton picking was practically completed early in the month in the northeastern portion of the cotton belt; the yield of the late crop proved to be somewhat better than expected in portions of South Carolina. Cold, cloudy weather hindered picking in the northwest portion of the belt during the first half of the month, but this work made better progress under more favorable weather conditions during the latter part. Considerable cotton remained to be picked in Oklahoma at the close of the month.

Pastures, truck, and fruit.—The month was mostly favorable for pastures in the South. The first half was very unfavorable for stock in the North and Northwest, as it was extremely cold and the ranges were snow-covered. There was much suffering and considerable loss of stock in the upper Rocky Mountain and northern Great Plains districts as a result of the unfavorable weather conditions. Much of the range section was free of snow in the West and Northwest during the latter part of the month, however; grazing was possible in many localities, and stock showed a material recuperation, but much feeding was necessary in the Northwest on account of the poor range condition. The feed shortage resulted in heavy shipments of stock. Ranges were improved in the Pacific coast States by the rainfall of the month.

It was generally favorable for winter truck crops in the South, although frost did considerable damage to gardens in the west Gulf region and in northern Florida about the middle of the month. The latter part of the month was too cool for normal growth of truck crops along the south Atlantic coast and in Florida, but the lower temperatures were beneficial for the hardier truck in that State. Shipments of truck progressed from Florida, and good crops of cabbage and cauliflower were being harvested in California at the close of the month.

Citrus fruits colored nicely in Florida and strawberries were in fair condition, although the lower temperatures the latter part of the month unfavorably affected them. The month was generally favorable for citrus fruits in California, notwithstanding some damage resulted to oranges and olives in the central portion of the State by frost about the middle of the month. Cherry and peach buds were damaged in portions of Oregon by cold weather the latter part of the month, but at the same time citrus fruits were benefited in Florida by the cooler weather. At the close of the month the picking of oranges and lemons was progressing satisfactorily in California, with no serious frost losses reported.